MARVEL

ASTONISHING X-MEN #6

SOULE
DEL MUNDO

LONDON.

THIS IS WHAT I WANT.

SETTTTT...

...ME...

...FREEEEEEE...

ALMOST

THERE.

WHAT I *NEED.*

AFTER SO LONG...AT LAST...

...IT'S TIME TO BRING THINGS TO A CLOSE.

NO... *NO.*

WE'VE *LOST.*

YES... YES! I WIN!

THE ASTRAL PLANE.

YOU PLAYED WELL, CHARLES, BUT WAS THERE EVER REALLY ANY *DOUBT?*

PROBABLY NOT, AMAHL. NOT REALLY.

I'LL BE LEAVING SHORTLY. I HAVE NEW GAMES TO PLAY, OUT IN THE WORLD.

YOU'LL STAY HERE, OF COURSE--BUT I'LL BUILD YOU A PLEASANT REALITY TO INHABIT BEFORE I GO. YOU'VE EARNED IT, MY FRIEND.

I APPRECIATE THAT. BUT THERE IS A MATTER TO ADDRESS, BEFORE WE GO.

THESE THREE. ROGUE, MYSTIQUE AND FANTOMEX. THEIR ROLES IN OUR GAME AREN'T COMPLETE.

THEM? I DON'T NEED THEM ANYMORE. YOU KNOW...AS MY GIFT FOR BEING SUCH A WONDERFUL OPPONENT ALL THIS TIME... I'LL HONOR OUR ORIGINAL AGREEMENT.

YOU MAY KILL THEM HOWEVER YOU WISH.

THE SHADOW KING IS GRACIOUS IN VICTORY.

YOU NEVER REALLY HAD A CHANCE, CHARLES. I HAD A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA THIS TIME. PERHAPS YOU NOTICED?

I DID. YOU SEEMED... ***STRONGER*** THAN USUAL.

YES, I KNOW! I FOUND A POWER SOURCE, JUST DRIFTING...LONG FORGOTTEN, I THINK. DARK, CONFUSED, SAD. QUITE WONDERFUL.

TURNS OUT IT WAS THE KEY TO EVERYTHING.

SO YOU'RE SAYING...YOU CHEATED?

WHY... YES. I SUPPOSE I DID.

I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT, OLD FRIEND, BUT YOU KNOW. ALL'S FAIR.

I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED NOTHING LESS.

BUT PLEASE, DON'T CONCERN YOURSELF.

SO DID I.

THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE WAY THE X-MEN FIGHT.

THEIR HISTORY TOGETHER--ALL THOSE VICTORIES, DEFEATS, SECRETS, LIES, BETRAYALS, LOVE AND HATE--IT MAKES THEM SOMETHING ONLY THEY CAN BE.

THEY FIGHT FOR THEMSELVES, AND FOR US, BUT ALSO FOR *WHAT THEY ARE.*

EVERY BATTLE IS A STATEMENT.

WE ARE *MUTANTKIND.*

LOOK HOW BEAUTIFUL WE ARE.

ACT I

ASTONISHING X-MEN

LIFE OF X
PART SIX

IT IS THE ENDGAME.

THE EVIL SHADOW KING HAS REACHED OUT FROM THE ASTRAL PLANE AND TAKEN CONTROL OF BOTH GAMBIT AND LOGAN, USING THEM TO SPREAD A TERRIFYING PSYCHIC INFECTION THROUGH LONDON THAT WILL, SOON ENOUGH, OPEN A PORTAL FROM HIS WORLD TO OURS AND SET HIM FREE. AS THE HUMAN AUTHORITIES AUTHORIZED DRASTIC MEASURES TO SAVE THE CITY, BISHOP SUCCUMBED TO THE INFECTION. ONLY PSYLOCKE AND AN EXTREMELY UNSTABLE ARCHANGEL REMAIN TO PROTECT BOTH THE PEOPLE OF LONDON AND THE X-MEN WHO HAVE TRAVELED INTO THE ASTRAL PLANE TO DEFEAT THE SHADOW KING: FANTOMEX, MYSTIQUE AND ROGUE.

HOPE IS IN SHORT SUPPLY, BUT THE GAME IS NOT YET DONE...

...AND CHARLES XAVIER HAS A PLAN.

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LONDON.

XAVIER

YOU

BAST-- NGGGH!

YOU. I WAS WONDERING IF WARREN WOULD EVER FIND ENOUGH BRAVERY TO LET THE ARCHANGEL OUT.

NNNGH

IT WAS NOT BRAVERY.

IT WAS *INEVITABILITY.*

SSSSK

GAH!

THERE IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO.

THIS, TOO, IS INEVITABLE.

YOU THINK?

I'M NOT SO SURE.

WHAT ARE THEY *DOING?*

51.503267 N 3 W

SERGEANT, I DO NOT CARE.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.
SUPERHUMAN CRISIS COMMAND CENTER.

FOR OUR PURPOSES, ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT THEY'RE KEEPING EACH OTHER OCCUPIED, AND STAYING IN THE TARGET ZONE.

HOW LONG UNTIL DROP?

*AH...*A LITTLE UNDER TEN MINUTES, COMMANDER KEENE.

ACCELERATE THAT, IF YOU CAN. THE PSYCHIC INFECTION IS SPREADING FASTER THAN EXPECTED. IF IT GETS PAST THE QUARANTINE ZONE, WE'LL HAVE TO LEVEL ALL OF LONDON TO STOP IT.

WE NEED TO STERILIZE THE LOCATION ***NOW.***

SIR, WE STILL HAVE ASSETS IN THE TARGET ZONE. SHOULDN'T WE--

OF COURSE. QUITE RIGHT. TRANSMIT THE EVAC CODE IMMEDIATELY. MAXIMUM SAFE DISTANCE.

IF THERE IS SUCH A THING.

ARCHANGEL! TALK TO ME! WHAT'S HAPPENING OVER THERE?

ALL MISFIT UNITS, THIS IS CONTROL.

CLEAN ROOM PROTOCOL HAS BEEN ACTIVATED. REPEAT: CLEAN ROOM IS ACTIVE. TAKE ALL NECESSARY ACTIONS.

OH, HELL.

SAY, LADY. IT'S, *AH*, PSYLOCKE, INNIT? LISTEN, YOU GOTTA LET US GO. JUST GONNA BE MORE TROUBLE FOR YOU WHEN ALL THIS SHAKES OUT, THEY FIND OUT YOU HELD US LIKE THIS.

BUT YOU LET US GO, ALL'S FORGOTTEN. WE'LL EVEN PUT IN A GOOD WORD, SURE WE WILL.

I APPRECIATE THAT.

WHAT'S THE CLEAN ROOM PROTOCOL?

NO IDEA.

HONESTLY?

RIGHTO. NOW, MAYBE YOU CAN--

SURE, MATE. IN A MINUTE.

OH, *HELL.*

ATTACK, MY X-MEN!

OF ALL THE MUTANTS, WHO BETTER FOR A FIGHT IN THIS CURSED PLACE, WHERE REALITY SHIMMERS IN THE MIND LIKE AN OIL SLICK ON THE SEA?

ROGUE BECOMES SOMEONE NEW WITH EVERY TOUCH.

MYSTIQUE BECOMES SOMEONE NEW WITH EVERY WHIM.

AND FANTOMEX, OF COURSE--THE MAN OF ILLUSIONS.

THESE THREE... FLUIDITY ITSELF.

NOT LIKE LOGAN, WITH HIS CODES AND SELF-CONTROL AND GRIEF. HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS, ALL TOO WELL.

OR GAMBIT, SO ENSCONCED IN THE GLAMOUR OF BEING THE KING OF THIEVES THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO BECOME ANYTHING ELSE.

BISHOP, ARCHANGEL AND PSYLOCKE AS WELL.

TOO CONTROLLED, TOO RIGID.

THEY COULD NOT FIGHT THE SHADOW KING HERE.

BUT ALL HAVE THEIR ROLES.

HOW FORTUNATE THAT THESE WERE THE ONES WHO WERE CALLED.

FORTUNATE INDEED.

HOLD NOTHING BACK!

THIS IS THE MOMENT.

FAROUK'S MIND IS FRACTURED BETWEEN DEFENDING HIMSELF ON THE ASTRAL PLANE...

...SPREADING HIS FILTH THROUGH THE PEOPLE OF LONDON, TRYING TO BUILD A LARGE ENOUGH PSYCHIC PRESENCE IN THE REAL WORLD TO ESCAPE...

...MAINTAINING HIS HOLD ON GAMBIT AND LOGAN...

...AND OF COURSE...

...KEEPING ME CHAINED.

OF THESE, THE LEAST OF HIS ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON ME. AND WHY NOT?

I STOPPED FIGHTING HIM LONG AGO. I HAVEN'T PUT ANY REAL PRESSURE ON THESE SHACKLES FOR CENTURIES.

AT FIRST, I STRUGGLED WITH EVERYTHING I HAD, BUT I COULD NOT BREAK FREE--NOT AS A SPIRIT, A MERE SHADE. HE KNEW THAT, AND I CAME TO LEARN IT.

THERE WAS NO WAY I COULD FREE MYSELF.

NOT WITHOUT MY X-MEN.

BUT BECAUSE I STOPPED FIGHTING, HE THOUGHT I COULD NOT, OR WOULD NOT, AND INEVITABLY, OVER TIME, HE RELAXED HIS HOLD. NOT ENOUGH--BUT A BIT.

ENOUGH THAT I COULD PLAN.

AND NOW, WITH HIS ATTENTION DIVERTED IN SO MANY WAYS, ANOTHER SLACKENING. HE HAS MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT. HE IS SO CLOSE TO VICTORY, AFTER ALL.

HE LESSENS HIS GRIP, EVER SO SLIGHTLY.

THOOOM

AND THAT IS ENOUGH.

SHADOW KING!

ZZZCK

AAGH!

YOUR REIGN IS ENDED.

HOW? HOW?

THIS WAS NEVER A GAME, FAROUK.

NOT TO ME.

SHKK

YOU LIEEEEEEEEEE

IS HE...

...DEAD, PROFESSOR?

IS IT OVER?

YES. IT'S OVER.

AND NOW... THE FINAL PIECE.

KILLING US WILL NOT KILL US, WARREN!

WE'RE JUST THE BEGINNING.

THERE'S NOTHING--

--YOU CAN--

HOW'D WE...

AH, NON.

SMASH

SIR, I... I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE ABOUT TO DO THIS.

THE ORDER COMES FROM THE HIGHEST LEVEL. THERE'S NO CHOICE. THIS...THIS ISN'T AN EASY WORLD.

BUT...THOSE ***PEOPLE.*** THE CITY... HOW WILL WE LIVE WITH IT?

BY SPENDING THE REST OF OUR LIVES THINKING ABOUT EVERYONE THIS ACTION WILL SAVE.

ARCHANGEL...IT'S ***US.*** DON' KNOW WHAT WE ***DID,*** BUT WE AIN' GON' DO IT NO MORE. COME ON...WE ALL FRIENDS HERE, *NON?*

HE AIN'T LISTENIN', GAMBIT. STOP TALKIN' AND GET THOSE DAMN CARDS OUT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU SAY.

EVERYTHING ENDS.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, REALLY. THIS IS WHAT I WANT. WE TALKED ABOUT IT.

WARREN!

...BETSY?

WARREN, I NEED YOU TO FOCUS.

I...YES. WHAT DO YOU NEED?

THE SHADOW KING SEEMS TO BE GONE. I CAN'T FEEL HIM ANYMORE. THE ASTRAL PLANE IS CLEAN. HERE AS WELL.

BUT THE INFECTION...IT HASN'T STOPPED. THE STREETS ARE FULL OF PEOPLE HIS MIND TOUCHED.

AND...IT SEEMS TO BE *DOING* SOMETHING TO THEM. THERE'S AN ENERGY...

I KNOW. I CAN FEEL IT, TOO.

I THINK THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY BE GOOD FOR ME. MY IDENTITY, I MEAN. AFTER ALL, WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT ME, REALLY? NOTHING VERY NICE.

MURDERER, THIEF, LIAR--THE WEAPON PLUS BOYS DESIGNED ME TO BE THOROUGHLY AWFUL. I THINK MOST WOULD SAY THEY'VE SUCCEEDED BEYOND THEIR WILDEST EXPECTATIONS.

PREPARE TO FIRE! *NONE OF THEM GET PAST US!*

SETTTT MEEEE FREEEE...

I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I CAN TO CLEANSE THE INFECTION-- BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE.

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE HAS THEIR OWN PLAN TO STOP IT BEFORE IT SPREADS ANY FURTHER. THEY'VE SENT PLANES. THEY'RE GOING TO ***DROP A BOMB.*** BURN IT OUT.

YES. I SEE THEM.

YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING. NO ONE ELSE CAN GET TO THOSE PLANES.

*JUST... REMEMBER THAT WE'RE TRYING TO **SAVE** PEOPLE, ALL RIGHT?*

SAVE PEOPLE. YES.

BUT YOU DO SOMETHING BIG ENOUGH, GOOD OR BAD, AND IT WASHES AWAY EVERYTHING ELSE.

AND THIS... THIS IS BIG. THIS-- THEY WILL ***NEVER*** FORGET.

OH, GOD.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, ELIZABETH. EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE.

FANTOMEX? YOU'RE BACK? BUT... I DIDN'T PULL YOU OUT OF THE ASTRAL PLANE YET. HOW--

YES. I AM BACK.

BUT I'M NOT FANTOMEX.

I'M CHARLES XAVIER.

BUT YOU CAN CALL ME X.

END OF ACT I.

HOUSE OF X

In the HOUSE OF X, we're getting ready for something really special, RESURRXION PHASE II. That's right, we'll be cycling in some new ongoings and a few special limited series.

While I can't talk about all of what's in the cooker, I can tell you that lovers of the classic on-again, off-again romance between Rogue and Gambit have a special treat in store with a ROGUE & GAMBIT five-issue limited series coming out in January. It's by KELLY (HAWKEYE, A-FORCE) THOMPSON and PERE (DEADPOOL VS. PUNISHER) PÉREZ, and the two are bringing a smart, sassy and seductive flavor to this dysfunctional duo.

Then there's LEGION, another five-issue limited series by PETER (X-FORCE, X-STATIX) MILLIGAN and WILFREDO (MOON KNIGHT, SECRET EMPIRE: BRAVE NEW WORLD) TORRES. Peter brings his own brand of brilliant insanity while Wilfredo's keen sense of body language and expression adds to the inherent eccentricity of the character and the story. I highly recommend both of these books.

Now for teasing upcoming projects, I can say that there are at least two new ongoing series in development. One completely unexpected and the other a return of a fan favorite. It's too early to get into any more than that, but I'm sure most X-Fans will be excited when we make the announcements. Keep your eyes and ears open!

Now onto our checklist of the wonderful world of X:

X-MEN GOLD:

By Marc Guggenheim and Marc Laming. Kitty Pryde takes charge and leads a new team into a heroic age!
Issue #17!

X-MEN BLUE:

By Cullen Bunn and Jorge Molina. The time-displaced original five join their greatest enemy, Magneto. Evil mutants, you're toast!
Issue #17!

WEAPON X:

By Greg Pak, Marc Borstel and Ibraim Roberson. The Weapon X program is back, but this time they are building weapons of mutant destruction. Old Man Logan, Sabretooth and a team of stealthy killers take the bloody battle back to them.
Issue #12!

ALL-NEW WOLVERINE:

By Tom Taylor and Juann Cabal. A virus from another world threatens to wipe out mankind. Kicking off an epic tale that will take Laura Kinney to the stars.
Issue #28!

GENERATION X:

By Christina Strain and Eric Koda. Jubilee and a band of mutant misfits in the new Xavier Institute. What could go wrong? EVERYTHING!
Issue #85!

JEAN GREY:

By Dennis Hopeless and Victor Ibáñez. She's the leader of X-MEN BLUE, but what does she do in her spare time? What would you do if you had a premonition of the Phoenix Force returning?
Issue #9 on sale now!

CABLE:

By Ed Brisson and Jon Malin. A new villain is traveling through time to assemble a doomsday weapon. Cable's most dangerous mission ever!
Issue #151 on now!

ICEMAN:

By Sina Grace and Robert Gill. The coolest hero on the planet, Bobby Drake the elder, in super-hero solo adventures.
Issue #8!

OLD MAN LOGAN:

By Ed Brisson and Mike Deodato Jr. Who is the Scarlet Samurai?!
Issue #31 on sale now!

ASTONISHING X-MEN:

By Charles Soule and a murderers' row of chart-topping and up-and-coming artists. Fan-favorite characters battle one of the X-Men's most dangerous foes!
Issue #6!

Make sure to let us know your thoughts. You can email us at officex@marvel.com (add "OKAY TO PRINT" in the subject line). And don't forget about #XMENMONDAY on Twitter, where I'll post some tidbit from one or more of the books and address your questions. I can't guarantee an answer for everybody, but I'll do my darndest!

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ZONE